



August “Nutrition Connection”: School Lunch Gets a Health Makeover!

School is back in session and this month’s **Nutrition Connection** summarizes the latest changes to the National School Lunch Program and provides tips for the parent who packs up a brown bag.

National School Lunch: Health Makeover

For the first time since the 1990’s, the school lunch program is getting a healthy makeover to combat the growing problem of childhood obesity.

Here are the specifics and a [video summary](#) of what you and your child can expect if they eat in the school cafeteria:

PORTION SIZE: In the past, schools have been required to meet a *minimum* calorie level for meals based on a child’s age. This year, they have also added a cap and require schools to stay below a maximum amount of calories. Your child might notice smaller portions! Here are the calorie ranges based on grade level:

GRADE LEVEL: CALORIE RANGE

K-5: 550-650 calories
6-8: 600-700 calories
9-12: 750-850 calories

GRAINS: This year at least 1/2 of the grains offered must be whole-grain rich. Next school year, 100% of those grains must be whole-grain rich. Expect to see whole grain pizza crusts and burgers served on whole-wheat buns!

VEGETABLES & FRUITS: There will be two times as many fruits and vegetables offered, and schools must now pay attention to color! Vegetables rich in colors, such as dark green and red/orange and varieties of beans and starches must be presented on a weekly basis.

MILK: In the past, a child could choose from either skim, 2%, or whole milk. This year, schools will only include skim or 1%. Flavored milks, such as chocolate, will be available, but they must be skim.

SODIUM: There will be no changes to sodium requirements this year, but beginning in the next school year and the following years, reductions in sodium will be required and are based on the age of the child. As example, the sodium in lunch for a K-5th grade child will be limited to 1230 mg (2013-14), 935mg (2014-15), and 640 mg (2015-16) in upcoming school years.

FAT: The requirement for saturated fat remains the same and can make up no more than 10% of the meal's calories. Trans fats, on the other hand must be limited to 0 grams per serving.

The Brown Bag

If you are a parent who will be packing a lunch 5x a week for 9 months, you might need some new ideas! Here are 15 healthy ideas from Web MD: [15 Fresh Lunch Ideas](#), and for ideas to inject some fun into your kid's brown bag check out this: [STL Moms Segment](#).

Packing a balanced lunch takes a bit of planning ahead, and if you include your child in the process, you improve the odds that his/her lunch doesn't get traded! In addition, many kids have a short amount of time to eat. Pack a lunch that can be eaten quickly, i.e.: apple slices versus unpeeled orange. As you create your grocery list, think about small simple changes that can transform an old standby into something fresh and exciting that your kiddos will look forward to!

Here are some examples!

Old Lunch	Parent Make-Over
<i>PB&J</i> Peanut butter & jelly on Bunny bread	<i>PB&J Pin-wheels</i> Spread peanut butter and 100% fruit jelly on a whole wheat tortilla, roll up and cut into bite size pieces
<i>Lunch-able: Pizza style</i>	<i>Pizza muffins – Kid assembly</i> Whole wheat English muffin, side of marinara, mozzarella cheese and last night's grilled chicken
<i>Side of: Pretzels/Goldfish</i>	DUNK IT Cut up assorted veggies with ranch or hummus Kid's love to DIP!
<i>Bag of chips</i>	DUNK IT Cut up fruits with a peanut butter, and yogurt dip (<i>see below</i>)
<i>Chocolate chips cookies</i>	Chocolate pudding with sliced bananas
<i>Capri-Sun</i>	1% Chocolate milk

Peanut butter and Yogurt Dip

Ingredients:

½ cup peanut butter (avoid low-fat, it just has more sugar!)

½ cup non or low-fat vanilla Greek or regular yogurt

1 Tbsp. honey

Directions:

Combine all ingredients, and dip away!



**If you follow these guidelines your everyday foods will be much improved!
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